

## CHARACTER OF MILL AVENUE DISTRICT

In a venerable and historic building, a local family has sustained a successful business in Mill Avenue District since 1956...if that's not relevant to Tempe's history and continued demand as a place of commerce, I don't know what is. Located in the county's most acclaimed historic building, Monti's La Casa Vieja has spanned the decades offering its historic charm...and hearty fare...to an extremely loyal base of patrons. Food fads come and go; but Monti's is such a strong tradition that it is poised to continue evolving and developing new loyalty well into the future under the leadership of its favorite son.

No one understands better than Michael Monti the art of making a visit to la casa Vieja a memorable and meaningful experience. It's not just about the food. To meet Michael Monti is to understand why people keep coming back for more.

**PROFILE:** Michael Monti

**AGE:** 40

**TITLE/ORGANIZATION:** President, Monti's la casa vieja

**LENGTH OF TIME ASSOCIATED WITH MILL AVENUE DISTRICT:** I've been involved as Monti's leader for 14 years, but spent my entire lifetime understand the Monti legacy in Mill Avenue District.

**EDUCATION:** B.A., ASU; Juris Doctor, University of San Diego

**MAJOR CHALLENGE IN YOUR BUSINESS:** Labor; this is a service business and everything from quality to cost relates back to the quality and cost of labor.

**MENTORS/OTHERS ADMIRER:** I certainly owe a debt to "Fred" who advised me to (among other things) at least paint the front door of the restaurant every year. And, of course, my father (Leonard F. Monti) was an incredible force of nature creating the enduring presence of Monti's la casa vieja through the sheer power of his personality.

**LITTLE KNOWN FACT:** Many people assume that I inherited this restaurant; however, I had to finance the purchase of this business to satisfy the claims of other members of the extended family to the property and assets.

**HOBBIES/AVOCATIONS:** Fiction and non-fiction reading (I'm a faithful fan of Philip K. Dick), horseback riding, and Kenpo karate

- Q. How have you been involved to advance the goals of Mill Avenue District?
- A. As a member of the Monti family, I've watched Mill Avenue District evolve through boom and bust; sometimes we've been pleased with the changes, but other times we've been vociferous critics. As a member of the Tourism Alliance and Restaurant Association, and working with elected leaders and civic groups, I work to influence the right kind of forward trajectory for Mill Avenue District's future.

- Q. What story or aspect about Mill Avenue District is a favorite of yours?
- A. Sun Devil fans well remember the fall of 1996 when ASU, in a stunning upset, beat Nebraska. My partner assisted police that night in securing the torn-down goal posts in a storage facility in order to calm the ensuing street riot. In the following days, we retrieved the goal post, cut it into small pieces and mounted them on plaques. These plaques were auctioned off in a huge event broadcast live from Monti's on KTAR Sports Line, netting about \$10,000, which we returned to ASU's Athletic Department. Those trophies are still in high demand.
- Q. If you ruled the world, what would you change in Mill Avenue District?
- A. Having a bypass around Mill Avenue District would relieve downtown congestion. The people who want to "pause" here are the ones we'd like to accommodate on Mill Avenue...not those who just want to "pass through." We are a destination, not a drive-by on the way somewhere else.
- Q. What is your vision for the future of Mill Avenue District?
- A. My vision is the one that is actually beginning to occur; creating a "mini-Manhattan" with new residents and high-paying knowledge workers spending money in Mill Avenue District, right here next to the "life of the mind" aura of Arizona State University. There is no precedent in the region for what is happening here. I'd just like to put it all on "fast forward" please.
- Q. Is there a particular personal success of which you are most proud?
- A. Nothing compares to the joy of having beautiful kids and a loving family.
- Q. What makes Michael Monti part of Mill Avenue District's "character?"
- A. I was born on Mill Avenue at the Tempe (now St. Luke's) Hospital; most of the events of my life have played out on or around Mill Avenue. I am part of this community's lore and history and I have a stake in its future. Increasingly I assert my voice to express views and encourage results that are informed by my own experience here.